

BOOK REVIEW

CONSERVATION OF VEGETATION IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

Edited by

INGA and OLOV HEDBERG

Proceedings of a symposium held at the 6th Plenary meeting of the "Association pour l'Etude Taxonomique de la Flore d'Afrique Tropical (A.E.T.F.A.T.) in Uppsala (Sweden) Sept. 12th-16th, 1966.

Acta Phytogeographica Suecica 54.

Uppsala 1968, I-X, 1-320, 1 colour picture and 27 black and white pictures, 1 outline map, 20 sketch- and topographical maps, 8 vegetation maps, and 6 sketches and diagrams.

The book edited by the Hedbergs is a remarkable achievement from various points of view. It conveys more to the (interested?) reader than its title would suggest. The authors have penetrated so deeply into the botanical aspects of the endeavours towards the conservation of nature, that in this respect it may be called a book of the utmost importance. Many of those who are not familiar with the subject are not likely to expect this of a A.E.T.F.A.T. publication.

More than 50 botanists have contributed towards this book. From nearly all African countries south of the Sahara (they constitute a total of more than 40) data have been collected about particular flora-elements as well as the vegetation of every single country. The reader is also well informed about the achievements concerning the conservation and protection of the vegetation, and about what remains to be done in this particular field.

The book begins with a few introductory chapters, that are very well documented, dealing with the necessity and aims of the conservation of the natural riches of flora and vegetation. Special attention has been paid to the relation between fauna and vegetation, and the dangers that threaten the African vegetation are dealt with extensively. The yearly burning of the vegetation during the dry period, the overgrazing, the deforestation in favour of cultivation, and the clearing of woodland and bushes in order to fight the tse-tse fly are discussed.

The authors enter into the question of how the botanical riches could best be preserved in Reserves and National Parks, and they press for the necessity of well-guided general information. They emphasize the urgency of protective measures and warn against the danger that the developments in Africa today may cause the loss of many invaluable riches within the span of perhaps ten years, if intervening action is not taken at once.

With the descriptions of many countries, that constitute the greater part of the work, many interesting data are given in a nutshell concerning particular e.g. endemic and rare species, as well as those concerning vegetations.

Finally the descriptions are summarized about the following area's: the "Zone Sabelienne", Western Tropical Africa, East Africa, Southern Tropical Africa, South Africa, Madagascar and the Mascarenes.

The work concludes with a survey of African Flora's already in existence or in preparation and with a discussion of the progress made in mapping the African flora and vegetation.

All the chapters are provided with lists of literature, not too many, but just the right amount for anyone who looks for further information.

"Conservation of Vegetation in Africa South of the Sahara" is a most interesting book that will find its way to all institutions, research workers and those who take an interest in Africa. It is of interest also for those who are in some other way concerned with Africa either with the conservation of nature, or with taxonomic, geographical or ecological studies - even though it may be to only one of these!

M. F. MÖRZER BRUYNS